

ROBERT WODROW AND HIS CRITICS

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CONSIDERING the extraordinary industry of his pen, we find Wodrow's output in printed matter very limited. With the exception of a pamphlet of 26 pp. on the Oath of Abjuration, published without a writer's name, nothing was committed to type until he issued his well known *History*. The pamphlet, however, was sent out without his authority or knowledge in March, 1712. As he wrote to a "Friend" on October 2 of that year: "I must either blame you, or somebody you have communicated it to, for this odd step; for I never communicated it to any but yourself, and I can with all ingenuity declare that I had not the least suspicion, when [I] sent [it] to you, that the world should be troubled with it. It was a rude draft of what then straitened me as to the oath."¹ On the other hand his *History* was most carefully prepared, and was issued only after much revision and consultation of authorities. Its full title is: *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, from the Restauration to the Revolution: Collected from the Public Records, Original Papers, and Manuscripts of that Time and Other well attested Narratives. By Mr Robert Wodrow, Minister of the Gospel at Eastwood. Nec Studio nec odio. Vol. I. Printed by James Watson, His Majesty's Printer, MDCCXXI. Vol. II, MDCCXII.*² In advance he sent out a prospectus, and in it he declared that the book would have "an Introduction, containing the History of the Restauration of King Charles II. Collected from the Original Letters which passed 'twixt the Rev. Robert Douglas and other ministers of Edinburgh, and Archbishop Sharp their then Commissioner at London. Together with a large Appendix to each volume, comprising the Principal Vouchers." A copy of the prospectus, probably the only one preserved, is in the National Library, and is endorsed in Wodrow's handwriting. It is an 8-paged folio, with many corrections by the author.

I

One of the earliest criticisms of the *History* is found in *The Scottish Behemoth dissected, in a Letter to Mr Robert Woddrow; concerning the*

¹ *Correspondence*, I, 263.

² The price of the two volumes was two guineas, with half-a-crown additional for binding. Dibdin's assertion that the price had been *raised* to two guineas is inaccurate.

Publishing of a History of the Church of Scotland ; . . . Written by a Friend of the Author . . . Edinburgh, Printed by J. Ross and A. Davidson, and are to be sold at A. Davidson's Shop in the Parliament-house, and at most Booksellers Shops in Town. MDCCXXII. Folio, 30 pp. The book is anonymous, being signed only by the name "Philanax," but it was probably written by an advocate named Alexander Bruce, who had been in print several times before. So important did he think the topic that he proposed to publish a book on the subject, but the intention does not seem to have been carried out. He was, however, to supply the writer, who would undertake the work, with all the necessary material and would print such manuscripts as could "contribute towards clearing up the Reputation, and vindicating the Memory of any of the then contending Parties ; as even of any single Person, who was engaged in the Transactions of those Times : All which shall be carefully and impartially inserted." The projected book was to be "printed off in parcels," which parts were to cost one shilling each.

In *Behemoth* Bruce says, "he could only have Time to look into some few Passages of the Book : wherein, tho' I found some plain Forgeries in fact (whether by you [Wodrow] or your Informers, I shall not determine) and many Things true at the Bottom, but wholly disguised by your Way of relating them ; with diverting Interludes of Nonsense and Treason in your own Reflections and Observations upon the Papers you insert ; nor could I blame the Author, who has but traced the Steps of the worthy Forefathers of the Presbyterian Faith, whose beloved Method ever since the Days of their great Apostle Calvin, has been, to stick at nothing, however destructive to Christianity and humane Society, that might serve to advance their Dagon, and secure them in their Usurpation," and then follow details. The critic even goes the length of saying that "of these Forgeries and lying Wonders, our Author gives several remarkable Instances,"—which assertion he proceeds to illustrate.

This was probably the earliest of the attacks on the *History*, and came necessarily from the Episcopalian side, the bitterness of whose criticisms can easily be accounted for. There is no evidence discoverable that the promised reasoned exposure of Wodrow's deficiencies and methods ever saw the light, although a prospectus of the intended book was published.

Next year, on the same side, appeared *A True and Impartial Account of the Life of the Most Reverend Father in God, Dr James Sharp, Archbishop of St. Andrews . . . With a short but faithful Narrative of his execrable Murder, taken from publick Records, original Letters, and other Manuscripts, with a Preface Wherein a clear Discovery is made of the malicious Falsehoods contained in some late scandalous Books and Pamphlets, concerning that Affair. . . . Printed in the Year MDCCXXIII, sm. 8vo, 60+158 pp.*

The little octavo is anonymous, but it is believed to have been written by David Symson,¹ a son of that Andrew Symson, who was the Episcopal minister of Kirkinner and Douglas, from the latter of which charges he was ejected after the Revolution of 1688. Though no place of printing is given, the book was probably printed in his father's press in Edinburgh.²

In the "Publisher to the Reader," which extended to 60 pages, the writer accuses Wodrow of the misuse of historical documents, "and this sure cannot but be far more inexcusable in Mr Wodrow than any other Man, he being the Person who pretends to have diligently searched the Sheriff Court-books of Fife, for fines, etc."³ He affirms that Wodrow in his Introduction "most falsely and maliciously" makes certain statements. He asserts that "in his Abbreviate he gives of Mr Sharp's Letter to Mr Robert Douglas, dated the 29th of May 1660 [Wodrow], hath, if not wilfully perverted, yet grossly mistaken, the Meaning of the Writer," and says that there is evidence that he "most unfairly suppressed" relevant facts. When the writer comes to speak of what Wodrow has to say about the assassination of Sharp, he is particularly vehement. What the historian writes is "malicious calumny" and shows his "great Proficiency in the Art of Speaking Evil of Dignities, and reviling his Betters." His character of Sharp is "stuffed with wicked nonsense, and virulent lying Invectives against him." Mr Wodrow, he says, "thinks fit to bestow a whole section on his dutiful Action, and in the Entry thereto, industriously declines calling it a murder (as all Presbyterians do), but names it only a 'violent death,' 'a violent taking away,' etc."⁴ Sharp himself, he complains, Wodrow designates by "the charitable epithet of a 'bloody and perfidious man.'"⁵ His indictment of Wodrow's bias he closes with the recitation of a couplet: "one of their teachers before the Murder thus blabbed out in Rhyme—

' If Sharp do die the common Death of Men
I'll burn my books, and throw away my pen.' "⁶

There could be no doubt on whose side the critic was.

II

The Cameronian party had also their fault to find with Wodrow. Their objections arose chiefly from the fact that the historian was of that section of Presbyterianism that did not oppose the persecutions of the Governments of Charles II and James II as did the stricter Covenanters. Both before the Revolution and after, they desired to compromise with

¹ See Vol. IV, p. 254.

² See *ibid.*, p. 255.

³ See *Introduction*, p. x.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xxv.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xxix.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxxiv-v.

the ruling party, and especially after the Revolution to let bygones be bygones. John M'Main belonged to the strictest sect of those who opposed the Revolution Settlement, and who afterwards broke off from contact with the section that followed John Macmillan and made the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

M'Main gives a sketch of his life in a pamphlet he issued in answer to a citation to appear before the Presbytery of Edinburgh of the Church of Scotland on November 24, 1721, because he had "presumed, at your own Hand to take up, erect and keep a School within the City of Edinburgh, without a Licence or Warrant given you from any Authority, or producing any Testimonial of your good Conversation, or giving Evidence of your Orthodoxy or Loyalty, or submitting yourself according to Law."¹ If he did not answer the summons, he was told, he would be proceeded against and censured in absence.

M'Main ignored the citation and the summons was renewed on November 29.² He then replied that he did not require a licence to teach, as he taught his school "in my own house without sellary." He adds that he was a graduate of Glasgow University, receiving his diploma in May 1701.³ On completing his arts course he went home and taught a school for five years, until his parents died. He then entered the Divinity Hall of Edinburgh in 1706 "with sufficient testimonials." In 1707 he acted as chaplain in the family of Sir John Stewart of Blackhall, and in May received new testimonials from the Presbytery. For the next thirteen years he lived mostly in Edinburgh, and for ten of these years had "taught school in this House, neither questioned for Licence or Testimonial. Yet one of the ministers came in yearly since 1711 and saw me teaching,"⁴ and that without fault or objection.

The reason for his declinature of the jurisdiction of the Presbytery is plain from the causes he gives "for departing out of the Way" his accusers followed. They were Erastian, apostates from the Covenant, had committed perjury, and so on. He was likely therefore to criticise Wodrow adversely.

In 1724 he published *The Life and Death of that eminently pious, free and faithful Minister and Martyr of Jesus Christ, Mr James Renwick. . . . written by the learned and famous Mr Alexander Shields, then Preacher of the Gospel in the fields. . . . Edinburgh, Printed for John M'Main, M.A., Schoolmaster at Liberton's Wynd-foot there, MDCCXXIV*. Prefixed is a long "Epistle to the Reader," in which is his review of the opinions of

¹ *The Summons Dimissed*, p. 8.

² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³ In the *Munimenta Almae Uni. Glasg.*, III, 171, he appears as "Joannes McMains," and is described as a "Scoto-Hibernus."

⁴ *The Summons Dimissed*, pp. 11-15.

Wodrow. He accuses him of exaggeration and bias in his attitude towards Renwick. "It is granted," he says, "he calls Mr Renwick a pious Person, a good Man, a Minister, and again, this zealous, serious and pious Youth : But that is no better than the Testimony of an Adversary, and, extorted from him, doth appear by his false and severe Innuendo, that he run to Lengths as led, or overdriven by several of the People he was embarked with ; By which Lengths he still seems to insinuate the foresaid sinful Heats, Heights and Extremities, inconsistent with the Character of a good, zealous and pious Minister. His Partiality here also appears in that he never imputes any sinful Heights, Lengths, or Extremities to those of his side, who went so great Lengths of Compliance with all the Defections." In general M'Main says that Wodrow "frequently speaks in Favour of that tyrannical royal Power, as if it were lawful Authority : withal insinuating that the Martyrs, who died refusing to own it, died as Fools and in an Error."

Without the addition on Renwick made by Shields he declares that Wodrow's *History* contains "but a very mank [defective], churlish, unfavourable, yea unfair Account of this faithful Witness, and others with him . . . while those Ministers and Professors, whom he so much applauds and whose sufferings he magnifies, were living at Ease, under the Wings of Antichristian Supremacy and Prelacy . . . whom yet Mr Wodrow patronises, copies after, and has them for his Vouchers." If we remember the virulence of the antagonism between the Church and the dissenters of the time, M'Main's criticisms cannot be accounted too extravagant.¹

Another belonging to the same sect as M'Main was Patrick Walker, the pedler-historian, and M'Main's contemporary, although neither mentions the other. Patrick's criticisms are diffuse rather than pointed and definite. On one matter he is very severe. Under date July 22, 1684, Wodrow records that he "found Patrick Walker, a boy of eighteen years or under, before the council. He confesses he was present at the murder of Francis Garden, one of the earl of Airly's troop, and refuses to discover his accomplices."² . . . The Council ordained him "to be questioned by torture, tomorrow, before the committee for public affairs, at nine of the clock."³ As a consequence Patrick was ordered, July 23rd, to the plantations, probably after he had undergone torture.

Walker was much hurt by Wodrow's reference to him. "Because," he says, "Mr Wodrow has transmitted my name under the notion of a murderer, I wish him repentance and forgiveness for what unaccountable

¹ He also published anonymously : *A Review of a Paper lately written against the being and Binding of our Sacred National Covenants ; Especially, the Solemn League and Covenant of the Three Kingdoms* : Edinburgh, 1727.

² *Hist.*, 2nd Edit., IV, 47.

³ *Ibid.*

wrongs he has done by his pen to the testimony, and to the names of Christ's slain witnesses for the same. For my self I am easy ; my tongue is yet in my head, and my pen in My hand ; and what I have to say upon that head, for my self and these with me, will run faster and further than he has feet to go. I am reflected upon, for not giving Mr Wodrow better information."¹ But Patrick cannot get off so easily. "It is impossible," says his editor, Dr. Hay Fleming, "to read that account without coming to the conclusion that it was Patrick who fired the fatal shot, 'out of a pocket-pistol, rather fit for diverting a boy than killing such a furious, mad, brisk man.' To him it appeared simply a matter of self-defence, for which his heart never smote him."² His own words are definite enough. "For my own part," he says, "my own heart never smote me for this ; when I saw his blood run, I wished that all the blood of the Lord's stated and avowed enemies in Scotland had been in his veins ; having such a clear call and opportunity, I would have rejoiced to have seen it all gone out with a gush"³—a somewhat barbarous desire.

In his Preface to Peden's *Life*, Patrick says he is to make "some remarks upon mistakes in Mr Wodrow's volumes." In his "Vindication of Cameron's name" he is more definite and angry. After detailing summarily some of Wodrow's alleged errors, he concludes : "all these gross lies and malignant sentences are to be found in two or three pages of his *History* lately published," and then goes on : "But it may be and will be surprising, stumbling and offensive to all thorow-paced Presbyterians in principle and practice, who are well-versed in the faithful contendings thorow the periods of this Church, especially in our last period of persecution, upon which Mr Wodrow writes, to find him, a toping leading Scots Presbyterian, in such gross mistakes, misrepresentations, and groundless, slanderous reflections upon the faithful followers of the Lamb, giving them so many nicknames, as 'Cameronians,' 'society-people,' the 'warm party,' the 'warmer sort,' 'warm hot persons,' the 'violent party,' 'highflers,' transmitting their contendings against defections of all kinds, and testimonies which they sealed with their blood, under the names of heights, heats, excesses, extremes, and flights."⁴ The next half hundred pages are then taken up with Patrick's trenchant dealing with no fewer than twenty-eight of Wodrow's grosser misstatements. He does not hesitate to nickname the historian. He is "historian Wodrow" who writes "in his biassed, partial, doited way," and makes "many nonsensical, groundless reflections upon the faithful followers of the Lamb," and winds up one onslaught by adding : "but these that deal in dirt cannot have clean hands." There can be no doubt about Patrick's

¹ Hay Fleming's *Six Saints of the Covenant*, I, 352. ² *Ibid.*, I, xxxiii.

³ *Ibid.*, I, 354. ⁴ *Biographia Presbyteriana*, I, 257-8.

prejudice against Wodrow, whom he counts as the deliberate traducer both of himself and of his fellow Covenanters.

III

Soon after the publication of the *History*, criticism seems to have ceased at least in a published form. Perhaps the book was too dear for the ordinary reader to buy, but probably the main reason for the neglect was the moderate views that took hold of religious Scotland almost immediately on its appearance, as well as the penal laws under which Episcopalians were forced to live. Men had apparently lost interest in the struggle for religious and political freedom in the soft days that followed its partial establishment, and the story of the Covenanters had lost its glamour for them.

Some, however, did think that the memory of the Covenanters was worth making prominent, and to counteract this prevailing impression the Rev. William Crookshank, M.A., minister of a Scots congregation in Westminster, London, issued in 1749 in two volumes octavo what was a digest of Wodrow's *History*. In the preface Crookshank stated that "the Rev. Mr Robert Wodrow, minister of Eastwood, is the only person who has given a large Account of these things, i.e., the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland in the reigns of Charles II and James II, in his excellent history; but as that work is contained in two large volumes in folio; so there are but few that have either time to peruse it, or can afford to purchase it; and, since the reducing such a performance into a more narrow compass was thought proper, for making the history of this period more universally known, I was prevailed with, by many of my friends, to undertake the difficult task."¹ There could hardly be a more flattering reception given to the book, when it was issued, although it is probable that Crookshank's digest injured what circulation the original volumes might still have had. At least two further editions of the digest were published—one in Edinburgh in 1751, and another in Glasgow in 1787.

With the advent of the nineteenth century greater interest in Wodrow's work was shown. Charles James Fox, the British statesman, died in September 1806, and within two years afterwards there was published a history of the reign of James II by him. In it he seems to have depended greatly on Wodrow for the Scottish facts, and that later roused the ire of Wodrow's most bitter critic. "In recording the affairs of Scotland anno 1685, of course, Charles Fox," he says, "must devote some pages to the 'cruelty of Government.' To a whig politician undertaking such a theme, Wodrow was invaluable. Accordingly, that portion of Fox's

¹ Vol. I, page 1.

narrative betrays a puerile dependence upon Wodrow's records of the Sufferings of his Kirk—every page of which exhibits the marked characteristics of apocryphal and calumnious history. One of Wodrow's ingenious devices was, ever and anon to interject a remark, in the long catalogue of his unvouched libels, to the effect, that he had left many tales of cruelty untold, because the full narrative would be interminable." "Fox," he says, "found it necessary to remark," in terms of that *verbiage* about the authenticity of Wodrow already quoted, because his own historical essay was gone if the Scotch martyrologist was not to be trusted. He seems to have imagined that, seeing the author quotes, and prints, certain official documents, and is not to be contradicted in certain facts which he derives from such sources, that therefore his history is thoroughly authenticated throughout. Wodrow's work, indeed, is garnished and puffed out with a vast parade of public documents, printed entire. But under this historical disguise lurk the real merits of the martyrologist, as a historian, like the person of Goose Gibbie half smothered under the borrowed panoply of war." It is perhaps noteworthy that Fox's own words are: "No historical facts are better ascertained than the accounts that are to be found in Wodrow. In every instance where there has been an opportunity of comparing these with the records and authentic documents they appear to be quite correct"—words which do not seem to have been quoted by the critic.

That Wodrow's book should not have been reprinted caused astonishment to Thomas Frognall Dibdin, the Bibliographer, on his visit to Scotland in 1824. "Considering," he says, "that, even without the warm eulogy pronounced on this work by Mr Fox, in his historical labours, these volumes have long richly deserved republication, one is surprised that so valuable a work, in so repulsive a garb (for it is most wretchedly printed) has been suffered to remain without improvement. A new edition of Wodrow (now becoming excessively rare) may be no unprofitable, as well as a highly creditable speculation to a Scotch bookseller. The more so as Wodrow (according to Dr. Watt¹) 'left numerous MSS. behind him which are preserved in some of the public libraries of Scotland, and testify his pre-eminence and research.'"

Perhaps the greatest compliment ever paid to Wodrow was the republication of his huge tomes *in extenso* in the years 1828-31 by Dr. Robert Burns of Paisley. Burns reduced the folios to the more useful octavo in four volumes, and prefixed a "Memoir of the Author" in which, *inter alia*, he dealt with the writer's critics. He tells how "the abettors

¹ Author of the well-known *Bibliotheca Britannica*. Dibdin's remark that the first edition of Wodrow is "excessively rare" is hardly borne out by the fact. For the location of collections of Wodrow papers, see *Records Scot. Ch. Hist. Soc.*, III, 125-134.

of persecution and the fierce adherents of the Stuart dynasty smarted under the exposé which was made of the 'mystery of iniquity,' and felt the more tenderly because, alas! it was 'no scandal.' 'Facts,' observes Mr Wodrow in one of his letters to a friend in London, 'facts are ill natured things'; and it was precisely because the facts of the case could not be set aside, that the assault became the more fierce against the temper and spirit of the author. Anonymous and threatening letters were sent to him. Squibs and pasquinades were liberally discharged, under masked batteries, against the obnoxious book that told so much unwelcome truth."¹ The editor's final judgment is: "The work is, beyond all question, exactly what it undertakes to be, a faithful and impartial record of facts and characters. Its extreme accuracy has been tested by the best of evidence, that of documents, public, official and uncontradicted. Its facts will not be relished by time-serving historians, who have prostituted the dignity of history to the low ends of a mean and drivelling partisanship; and the proud march of the smooth surface narrator may not stoop to the minutiae of its private and domestic details. Nevertheless, its value as a record is beyond all praise; and the picture which it gives of the manners and spirit of the age is graphical and instructive. Says Chalmers, the learned author of the *Biographical Dictionary*—"It is written with a fidelity that has seldom been disputed, and confirmed at the end of each volume, by a large mass of public and private records.'" ²

These opinions did something to rehabilitate the book in public esteem, and now, except where prejudice rules, it is accepted at its real worth. Wodrow, in fact, was a pioneer in historical research long before the historians of the present and the near past had settled down to the scientific examination of the sources on which exact history depends.

One would naturally expect Professor William Edmonstone Aytoun to have his way in denunciation of Wodrow's account of the Persecution, and he has it in an appendix to his *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers*, published for the first time in 1849. He is there principally engaged with what he concludes is the careless account of Macaulay in his *History*, but in the by-going he deals trenchantly with Wodrow. "It may be proper," he says, "very shortly, to give a brief account of his writings, notions and credibility." And then he goes on—"Most extraordinary writing it is, in every sense of the word. Born in a credulous age, Wodrow was endowed with a power of credibility which altogether transcends bounds. He has not been inaptly styled the Scottish Aubrey, though Aubrey³ by the side of Wodrow would almost appear a sceptic. The Romish miracles sink

¹ *Op. cit.*, I, xi.

² *Op. cit.*, I, xii.

³ John Aubrey, antiquary and folklorist, was born at Easton-Percy, Wiltshire, March 12, 1626, and died at Oxford, June 1697.—*Chambers's Encyclo.*, s.v.

into insignification compared with those recorded by Mr Macaulay's pet authority.¹ But for the numerous, though possibly unintentional profanities, and the grossness of some of the anecdotes which were scattered over its pages, the *Analecta* would be pleasant reading."² He asserts that Wodrow is "the sole authority upon which Macaulay founds his narrative" of the murder of John Brown of Priesthill by Claverhouse. "Nowhere in print or pamphlet, memoir, history or declaration, published previously to Wodrow, does even the name of John Brown occur, save once in the *Cloud of Witnesses*, a work which appeared in 1714; and in that work no details are given, the narrative being comprehended in a couple of lines. I have searched for it amidst all the records of the so-called martyrology, but cannot find a trace of it elsewhere, until the Reverend Robert Wodrow thought fit to place the tale, with all its circumstantiality in his History."³

Having thus shown his own diligence, Aytoun goes on: "How, then, came Wodrow to know anything about the murder of John Brown? He could have had no personal knowledge or recollection of the circumstances for he was not quite six years of age at the time when it is said to have occurred. He has not offered one scrap of evidence in support of his allegation, and merely leaves it to be inferred that he had derived the story from that most uncertain of all sources, tradition. Even at the hands of the most honest, cautious, and scrupulous chronicler, we should hesitate to receive a tale of this kind; but from Wodrow, who is certainly entitled to claim none of the adjectives as applicable to himself, who can take it? No one, I should hope, whose prejudice is not so strong as to lead him to disregard the most ordinary verification of evidence"⁴—from which it would appear that history recorded by any except witnesses of the events described, does not carry much weight with it?

In the *North British Review*, XIII, 14, the writer says that Aytoun's tale of the death of John Brown "indicates that that writer thought" the miracle-mongering minister of Eastwood ventured, upon no documentary authority at all, to concoct and publish the story. "The charge seems to be," continues the *Review*, "that Wodrow told a deliberate falsehood—for the malice of his own heart concocted a damning tale," after Claverhouse had been two and thirty years in his grave," and palmed "this foul slander upon a credulous world"!

Unfortunately for Aytoun's eloquence the evidence that Brown was cruelly slaughtered, and that Aytoun's researches did not extend far enough, is overwhelming. It seems strange that one whose prejudice is notorious and outspoken should blandly accuse another writer of the

¹ He means Wodrow.

² *Lays*, ed. 1886, p. 256.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 261.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 261-2.

same offence. One of his last descriptions of Wodrow is the "miracle-mongering minister of Eastwood."¹

The greatest and most virulent onslaught on the accuracy and credibility of Wodrow, however, was made by Mark Napier, Sheriff-depute of Dumfriesshire and Galloway. Napier was appointed to that judicial office in 1844, and had exercised his critical acumen in several literary directions before he tackled the life of Graham of Claverhouse, of whose reputation he proved a lusty defender. The office Napier occupied would suggest fitness for stating a case and for aligning arguments with fairness and without bias, but the result shows that he had neither the one nor did the other. He was guilty of using the language of unmeasured abuse and invective. He invented several approbrious epithets for Wodrow as well as for his defenders. In his index to his book on Claverhouse he scornfully refers to Wodrow's "disingenuous adoption, without a vestige of evidence, of a brutal falsehood" concerning Archbishop Sharp; to his "outrageous calumnies" about a certain sheriff-depute of Fife; to his "gross calumny" and "false history" concerning the introduction and abrogation of the use of torture in Scotland; and to his "perversion" of a Privy Council's "humane order." He calls the story of the Wigton martyrdom a "calumnious fable," and, in short, concludes that "the principle of Wodrow's work" was to "glorify all the worst characters of the period and to calumniate the good." His vocabulary of abuse becomes too limited, and he describes Wodrow's volumes as his "Martyrological History," thus putting it on a level with some of the legendary hagiologies of the earlier centuries.

The space Napier's review occupies is astonishing. Besides odd references now and again throughout his three volumes on Claverhouse, it extends to seventy pages of the first volume, and in the index of the three volumes his references to the historian cover two pages. In addition he sent out two pamphlets to justify his view,² and these take up altogether 415 pages, or roughly about the space of one volume of his three volumes on Claverhouse! The pamphlets were mainly a reply to the trenchant criticism of the Rev. Archibald Stewart, the minister of Glasserton in Wigtonshire, who, it is no exaggeration to say, demolished the case Napier had built up.

Stewart's *History Vindicated in the case of the Wigton Martyrs* (1869) is vigorous and without personalities, but its author had to meet the same

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 262.

² *The Case for the Crown in re The Wigtown Martyrs proved to be Myths versus Wodrow and Lord Macaulay*. Edinburgh, 1863. 142 pp., 8vo. *History Rescued in answer to History Vindicated being a Recapitulation of the "Case for the Crown" and the Reviewers reviewed in re The Wigtown Martyrs*. Edinburgh, 1870. 273 pp., 8vo. Usually found bound together.

virulent abuse as Wodrow. He was told that his pamphlet was nothing else than "the gift of a stone for bread." "His hallucination on the subject," it is said, "is most remarkable." In his denunciations Napier never gives his opponent his proper name: he is only "the minister of Glasserton," and "our reverend vindicator of history"—nicknames which are frequently repeated. Session records that were cited are dismissed as "the monstrous fabrication of that Penninghame calumny," and so on. Napier's method of controversy illustrates the ancient advice that when you have no case, abuse your opponent. One wonders what sort of language the Sheriff used in his judgments from the bench!

Napier was not convinced by Stewart. To the end he maintained that Wodrow's book was "a cancerous growth upon the History of Scotland," and that the story is a "calumnious tissue of monstrous fables. It has poisoned the History of Scotland to an extent that is now, perhaps, irremedial. He has misled all our historians of mark, from David Hume to Lord Macaulay, who have blindly followed him, and lazily, or lovingly, submitted to his rubbish, without an attempt at investigation. . . . Fountainhall, the Whig counsel for the gallows-martyrs of the Restoration, would have laughed Wodrow's Martyrology to scorn." It is the same with regard to the controversy over John Brown of Priesthill. So confident was Napier that he had ground the narrative of it to powder, that he confidently declares: "No future historian will ever repeat that story as it has been told over and over again for nearly a century and a half." But, alas! the tale is still going its round as if it had never been challenged. It is impossible not to sympathise with the conclusion of T. F. Henderson in the *Dictionary of National Biography*: "The value of his (Napier's) books as historical guides," he says, "is much impaired by their controversial tone and violent language . . . His exaggerations necessarily awaken distrust even when he has a good case."

IV

On the whole, recent historians, while acknowledging that Wodrow has deficiencies, are more generous in their estimate of his work and the trouble he took in doing it. Hill Burton was an Episcopalian, but he was also a historian who tried to be fair in the judgments to which he came. His style may not be incomparable, but the reader feels that his knowledge of the field is extensive, considering the restrictions of the time when he wrote. He has a modified appreciation of the work Wodrow did, and especially of the vast labour it caused. "The chief value of his work to the historical enquirer," he says, "is in its multitude of documents—some reprinted from rare works, others taken from manuscript authori-

ties. There may be here and there inaccuracies in the rendering of these documents, but, on the whole, they are deserving of reliance ; for Wodrow was one of those firm believers in the righteousness of their own cause who are prepared to proclaim rather than conceal what some might deem reproaches. He took much from the recitals of the sufferers themselves, among whom he had relations as well as personal friends, but the narratives thus collected must often be mistrusted as those of a man credulous and prejudiced. He was a believer in really all the current superstitions of his age. Besides his great work and his graphical collections, he left behind him, though unconsciously, something still more interesting to the curious. This was his note-book of private experiences—his *Analecta*.¹

No one was more prejudiced against the Covenanters than was Andrew Lang, and no less an authority on the whole subject than Dr. Hay Fleming used to laugh at his pretensions to be an accurate historian. Yet, in his *History of Scotland* Lang was greatly indebted to the Presbyterian divine, and handsomely acknowledged his obligations. His four volumes contain no fewer than eighty quotations and references to Wodrow's book, some of the quotations being several pages in length. In the middle of his narrative of the reigns of Charles II and James II, he adds this footnote of indebtedness : " Our most useful authority is Wodrow, minister of Eastwood, writing about 1715-20. He is the Calderwood of the period, very industrious, but of course not unprejudiced." When he came to record Wodrow's death in 1722, he again eulogises the historian, describing him as " a man void of offence, insatiably eager for knowledge, simple, moderate, laborious, and considering the strength of his feelings, a candid, as well as an industrious historian." One could hardly go so far in praising a writer of an opposite school.

Hume Brown was, perhaps, even a less imaginative writer than Hill Burton, whom he most nearly resembles, and he also estimates Wodrow's value at a higher figure. He describes him as " a timorously devout soul, yet curiously inquisitive regarding every novelty in speculation." He recites approvingly Wodrow's remark about himself, that he was of an " Athenian Temper," that is, like men " who spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or hear some new thing."

Altogether Wodrow has stood the test of examination by men who may be styled experts in this work. No doubt he seems to approve of what may now be called superstition. It would be easy to convict him of credulity, but, like others and perhaps stronger men, Wodrow could not escape being the child of his age. If he erred it was not through carelessness or conscious bias. He was " out " to discover the truth of events from which he had himself suffered, and to retail his discoveries to those who ought to be interested in them.

¹ *Hist. Scotland*, VII, 276-7.

